United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1227
16 September 1992

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and Portugal invited by Secretary-General to hold informal consultations under his auspices on the question of East Timor.

+ Agenda of 144 items recommended for consideration by General Assembly's forty-seventh session; among new agenda items are withdrawal of foreign forces from Baltic States, United Nations/CSCE coordination, assistance to Afghanistan and to Croatia.

+ Italian Air Force plane that crashed on 3 September while taking part in United Nations humanitarian airlift to Sarajevo, was struck by at least one missile, says preliminary Italian Goverment report.

+ Small scientific team describes testing of two plants built at Muthanna to destroy Iraq's chemical weapons as "very successful"; destruction process to begin in two weeks.

+ 1993 World Conference on Human Rights intended to achieve new awakening on human rights questions, says its Secretary-General, Antoine Blanca, Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights.

+ Secretary-General and Ford Foundation announce formation of international advisory group on United Nations financing; group's first meeting held today at Ford Foundation in New York.

+ The United Nations to undertake the largest civilian helicopter airlift to bring Angolan voters to the polls.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has invited the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and Portugal to hold informal consultations under his auspices on the question of East Timor, when both Ministers are in New York for the General Assembly's forty-seventh session.

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In his progress report, dated 11 September, the Secretary-General wrote that he was confident that such a consultation could lead to a "mutually agreeable format for the substantive talks and set them on a solid and fruitful course". He said he was committed to contribute his utmost to the search for a comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor.

The Secretary-General noted in his report that the cancellation last November of a planned visit to East Timor by a delegation from the Portuguese Parliament was attributed to a difference between the parties over a particular journalist nominated by Portugal to accompany the delegation. Since then, he wrote, the dialogue that had been held through the Secretary-General's good offices since 1983, had been interrupted. Document A/47/435

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A new agenda item on the complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the Baltic States was recommended this morning by the General Committee for consideration by the General Assembly's forty-seventh session.

The representative of Latvia, speaking also on behalf of Lithuania and Estonia, said that in spite of negotiations during the past year, foreign military forces remained on the territories of their countries. In an effort to implement a policy of preventive diplomacy, the United Nations should address the issue.

The Committee also recommended for consideration directly in plenary an agenda item on coordination of the activities of the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), and the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Two other new items would be allocated to the Second Committee (Economic and Financial): emergency international assistance for the reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan; and international cooperation and assistance to alleviate the consequences of war in Croatia and to facilitate its recovery. An item on consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean would be allocated to the First Committee (Political and Security).

The General Committee recommended that the Assembly include a total of 144 items in the agenda of its current session and defer the allocation of the item on the question of Cyprus until an appropriate time during the session. It was also recommended that the Assembly recess on 18 December and close the forty-seventh session on 20 September 1993.

The Committee endorsed the Secretary-General's suggestions that the general debate begin on Monday, 21 September, and end on Thursday, 8 October, and that the list of speakers be closed on Wednesday afternoon, 23 September. The provisional agenda, as well as the Committee's recommendations will go before the Assembly on Friday morning, 18 September.

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An Italian Air Force plane that crashed 3 September while participating in the United Nations humanitarian airlift to Sarajevo was struck by at least one missile, according to a preliminary report by the Italian Government made available to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) today. The airlift to Sarajevo, which began on 3 July, was suspended when the incident occurred. All four crew members aboard were killed.

A press release issued by the UNHCR today said the Italian report emphasized that the findings were only preliminary and that the investigation was continuing. The report noted that the mountainous terrain and lack of any evidence of radar emissions in the crash area tended to rule out the possibility that sophisticated radar-controlled or radar-based missile units were involved. It concluded that the missile must have been easily transportable.

The High Commissioner, Sadako Ogata, hoped to be able to recommend resumption of the airlift by the end of the week, the press release said.

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A small team of scientific experts, which inspected and tested two plants built to destroy Iraq's chemical weapons this week, has described the results as "very successful".

The three experts inspected and ran commissioning tests on the two plants, which were constructed at Muthanna by the Iraqi authorities after a design approved and supervised by the Special Commission set up under resolution 687 (1991), in connection with the disposal of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. While minor modifications have been recommended by the team, it is expected that the plant will be ready for full-scale operation in two weeks.

The destruction of Iraq's chemical weapons is expected to take 6 to 12 months.

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The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights was intended to achieve a new awakening on human rights questions and to perfect and make universal the existing human rights instruments, Antoine Blanca, Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, said in Geneva on Monday, 14 September.

In an opening address at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference, Mr. Blanca, who is the Secretary-General of the Conference, observed that promotion, protection and prevention were three essential elements in the context of human rights. He underscored the importance of non-governmental organizations and United Nations organs as key bodies for the promotion of human rights.

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The World Conference is being convened to assess the progress made in human rights since the adoption of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to identify obstacles to further progress in that area.

The representative of Austria announced that the World Conference would take place in Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993.

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The Secretary-General and the Ford Foundation have announced the formation of an international advisory group on United Nations financing. The first meeting of the group is held today at the Ford Foundation in New York.

In his 17 June report to the General Assembly entitled "An Agenda for Peace", the Secretary-General pointed to a growing financial crisis in the United Nations, and said the question of assuring financial security to the Organization over the long term was of such importance and complexity that public awareness and support must be heightened. He had therefore asked a "select group of qualified persons of high international repute" to assess current arrangements for funding United Nations operations and to recommend improvements. The Secretary-General intends to present their advice, together with his comments, for the consideration of the General Assembly.

The group will be co-chaired by Paul Volcker, former Chairman of the United States Federal Reserve, and Shijuro Ogata, retired Deputy Governor of the Japan Development Bank. The Ford Foundation will provide logistical, administrative and financial support to the group's work.

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To ensure that Angola's first national elections are both free and fair, the United Nations will undertake the most extensive civilian helicopter airlift of people in its history, to bring the country's 4.8 million registered voters from remote areas to polling stations. The elections -- for the presidential as well as the legislature -- are scheduled for 29 to 30 September.

To reach the one million Angolans living in areas inaccessible by road to voting stations, the United Nations must deploy 40 MI-8 twenty-passenger helicopters and nine fixed-wing aircraft. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will provide the logistics and technical support for the massive air operation, which will cost an estimated $10 million.

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